

IN THE DRAWINGS:

The attached drawing sheet includes amendments to Fig. 2 and replaces the corresponding drawing sheets of the Application.

Attachment: Replacement Drawing Sheet including amended Fig. 2.

REMARKS

Applicants have previously canceled claims 33-36, such that claims 1-32 are pending in this application. Claims 12-17, 21, and 27 have been amended with this response.

Applicants initially note with appreciation that the Examiner has identified allowable subject matter in claims 3, 6-11, 13-15, 21-24, and 27-32.

Claim 13 has been amended into independent form and includes all the limitations of base claim 1 and intervening claim 12. Claims 14 and 15 depend from claim 13 and are also allowable. Claim 27 has been amended into independent form and includes all the limitations of base claim 1. Claims 28-32 depend from claim 27 and are also allowable. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request allowance of independent claims 13 and 27, and dependent claims 14, 15, and 28-32.

Drawing Objections

The Examiner objects to the drawings under 37 CFR 1.83(a) as allegedly not showing every feature of the invention specified in claims 6, 16, 19, and 26. Applicants have amended Figure 2 to show seal member 39 as claimed in claim 6. The specification has been amended to include the reference number to clarify the drawings and the specification. No new matter has been added as the seal member was disclosed in the original claims.

Claim 16 recites a pipe portion that includes at least two fluid paths, each fluid path terminating in the second shoulder. With reference to Fig. 2, the T-section of pipe (i.e., tee connector 50) clearly includes two fluid paths that terminate in a shoulder 52 that could be a second shoulder. While the fluid paths are not numbered, one of ordinary skill in the art would easily understand that two fluid paths are shown in the drawings. As such, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of this rejection. If the Examiner decides to maintain this rejection, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner provide a detailed explanation of the subject matter allegedly missing from the drawings.

Figure 2 has been amended to show a threaded hollow pipe 73 as claimed in claim 19. The specification has been amended to include the reference number to clarify the drawings and the specification. No new matter has been added as the threaded hollow pipe was included in the claims as originally filed.

With regard to claim 26, Applicants submit that Figure 2 shows a fastener 12 that could be a self-tapping fastener. One of ordinary skill in the art would understand the invention without requiring that a self-tapping fastener be shown in the drawings, as self-tapping fasteners are well known. As such, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of this rejection.

Figure 2 contains no new matter because the seal member and the threaded hollow pipe were disclosed in the originally-filed specification. Applicants note that “information contained in any one of the specification, claims, or drawings of the application as filed may be added to any other part of the application without introducing new matter.” MPEP 2163.06. The seal member and the threaded hollow pipe were all disclosed in originally-filed claims 6 and 16, as well as in the specification, and therefore may be added to the drawings without introducing new matter.

In light of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to withdraw the objections to the drawings and enter amended Figure 2. If the Examiner decides to maintain any of the drawing objections, Applicants request that specific detail regarding what subject matter is allegedly missing be provided.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. §112

The Examiner rejects claims 12, 13, 16, and 21 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. In response, Applicants have amended claims 12, 13, 16, and 21 to traverse the Examiner’s rejections. With regard to claim 13, Applicants have removed the phrase “end fitting” as this phrase has no antecedent basis. Thus, “end fitting shoulder” has been replaced with “shoulder,” which was introduced in original claim 1.

In light of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the rejection of claims 12, 13, 16, and 21 under 35 U.S.C. §112.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. §102

The Examiner rejects claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 12, 18, and 19 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by United States Patent No. 1,306,236 (“Sloan”).

Independent claim 1 recites a fluid distribution system that includes a hollow pipe section that has at least one bore that extends longitudinally through the hollow pipe section. At least one longitudinal boss extends along the pipe section and is positioned about the bore. The distribution system further includes an end fitting and a secondary component configured to

attach to the end fitting. The end fitting includes a hollow body that is received within the bore and a shoulder that extends radially from the body. The shoulder is configured to abut against an end surface of the pipe section, and at least one bolt hole extends through the shoulder. The at least one bolt hole is configured to align with the at least one longitudinal boss. At least one fastener extends through the at least one bolt hole and is secured in the at least one boss.

Sloan does not teach or suggest, among other things, an end fitting that includes a shoulder that is configured to abut against an end surface of a pipe section of a fluid distribution system. Rather, Sloan discloses a flange I' spaced from a free end F² and adjustably secured to a free end F² of the sleeve F by bolts J. The Examiner identifies the flange I' as being analogous to the shoulder. However, the Examiner does not identify which component is analogous to the end surface of a pipe section. Thus, Applicants assume that the Examiner meant to identify the end surface of the free end F², as this is the only surface near the flange I'. However, this surface does not abut the flange I'. In fact, Sloan specifically states “[f]or holding these coils or rings K, K'. etc., tightly against their seats the flange I' is provided, spaced from the free end F² and adjustably secured thereto by the bolts J.” *Sloan, page 2, lines 88-91*. As such, the flange I' is not configured to abut the free end F² of the sleeve F, but is in fact configured not to abut the free end F².

In light of the foregoing, Sloan does not teach or suggest each and every limitation of claim 1. As such, claim 1 is allowable. In addition, claims 2, 4, 5, 12, 18, and 19 depend from claim 1 and are allowable for these and other reasons.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

The Examiner rejects claims 16 and 17 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Sloan in view of United States Patent No. 2,183,271 (“Wendel”).

Claims 16 and 17 depend from claim 1 and add additional limitations. As discussed with regard to claim 1, Sloan does not teach or suggest each and every limitation of claim 1, much less the limitations of claims 16 and 17.

Wendel does not cure the deficiencies of Sloan. Wendel discloses a method of fabricating solder-coated pipe fittings 10 such that male fittings (see Figs. 1 and 4) are formed into female fittings (see Figs. 2, 3 and 5) that have terminals 11a formed using a mandrel 15. However, Wendel does not teach or suggest, among other things, an end fitting that includes a shoulder that is configured to abut against an end surface of a pipe section of a fluid distribution system.

Rather, Wendel was cited by the Examiner to teach that straight pieces of pipe, tees, and elbows, are well known equivalent pieces of pipe that can be used together in a piping system.

As such, Sloan and Wendel, alone or in combination, do not teach or suggest each and every limitation of claim 1, much less the limitations of claims 16, and 17. Thus, claims 16 and 17, which depend from allowable claim 1, are allowable for these and other reasons.

The Examiner rejects claim 20 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Sloan in view of United States Patent No. 5,071,140 ("Quevedo del Rio").

Claim 20 depends from claim 1 and adds additional limitations. As discussed with regard to claim 1, Sloan does not teach or suggest each and every limitation of claim 1, much less the limitations of claim 20.

Quevedo del Rio does not cure the deficiencies of Sloan. Quevedo del Rio discloses a self-pressurized gasket seal that includes a first conduit 66 having a flange 18, and a second conduit 68 having a second flange 26 attached to the first conduit using a fastener. However, Quevedo del Rio does not teach or suggest, among other things, an end fitting that includes a shoulder that is configured to abut against an end surface of a pipe section of a fluid distribution system. Rather, Quevedo del Rio discloses the flange 18 separated from the second flange 26 by a space (see Fig. 2).

As such, Sloan and Quevedo del Rio, alone or in combination, do not teach or suggest each and every limitation of claim 1, much less the limitations of claim 20. Thus, claim 20, which depends from allowable claim 1, is allowable for these and other reasons.

The Examiner rejects claims 25 and 26 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Sloan in view of United States Patent No. 3,752,509 ("Stafford").

Claims 25 and 26 depend from claim 1 and add additional limitations. As discussed with regard to claim 1, Sloan does not teach or suggest each and every limitation of claim 1, much less the limitations of claims 25 and 26.

Stafford does not cure the deficiencies of Sloan. Stafford discloses a seal joint that includes tubes 10, 11 that are attached to annular first and second members 12, 13. The annular first and second members 12, 13 are attached using flange members 14, 15 that are drawn together by circumferentially disposed bolt means 15'. However, Stafford does not teach or suggest,

among other things, an end fitting that includes a shoulder that is configured to abut against an end surface of a pipe section of a fluid distribution system. Rather, Stafford discloses the flange members 14, 15 separated from each other by a space (see Fig. 2).

As such, Sloan and Stafford, alone or in combination, do not teach or suggest each and every limitation of claim 1, much less the limitations of claims 25 and 26. Thus, claims 25 and 26, which depend from allowable claim 1, are allowable for these and other reasons.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections of claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 12, 13, 16-20, 25, and 26, and allowance of claims 1-32.

The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned attorney should the Examiner determine that such action would facilitate the prosecution and allowance of the present application.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'TL J Otterlee', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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